



Why behavioral barriers make change hard in the workplace

To help employees adopt new technology, understand what's going on inside their heads

Breaking old habits and developing new skills is hard work for our brains. As the field of behavioral science has revealed, we have an instinctual need to save mental effort. It's been estimated that we make as many as 35,000 decisions every day. Our brains have evolved to make those decisions as efficiently as possible.

So it's no wonder that we often struggle when it comes to change, for example when adopting new tools and technologies in the workplace. Learning these new behaviors uses effort that our brain is trying to save. Behavioral science can shine a light on the barriers that create mental effort and prevent employees from changing their behavior.

When quick thinking makes change hard

Most of the thousands of decisions we make every day are made quickly, using imperfect information, in a way that minimizes risk. This means we have developed ways of thinking that are driven by habit or quick 'rules of thumb,' rather than by logically considering all available information each time we encounter a new situation.

But sometimes these shortcuts cause us to make the wrong decision, or prevent us from changing our behavior even when it would be to our benefit. Known as cognitive biases, behavioral science has found that we all share these systematic errors in judgement, even though we might like to think of ourselves as rationally minded.



Designing collaboration tools with employee behavior in mind

In the past, many digital products have not been designed to account for behavior and cognitive biases. As a result, most organizations have suffered from low uptake in certain applications as users have struggled to cope with the change.

That's why it's important to implement technology that has been designed with employee behavior and biases in mind. New tools that build on users' existing habits and behaviors - rather than try to work against them - have a greater chance of being used and integrated into your teams' day to day working lives.

When designing our application at Annotate, we applied this insight to help your employees engage with our document collaboration platform from day one.

Here are some of the biases and behavioral barriers you might come across when introducing a new collaboration tool, and the ways we've aimed to overcome them when designing Annotate.

Status quo bias and Familiarity bias

Change involves effort and potential risk. This means that unless we are presented with a very compelling reason to change, we generally prefer for things to stay the same - the 'Status quo bias'. It also means that we are more likely to trust and choose things that are familiar to us - the 'Familiarity bias.'





“Creating the desire to use new technology requires the IT group to engage much more deeply with the employee community to identify strategies that promote technology uptake... That engagement exposes the need to use proven behavioral science mechanisms to create that desire.”

GARTNER
FOUR WAYS FOR CIOs TO CULTIVATE DIGITAL
DEXTERITY IN LEADERSHIP AND THE WORKFORCE

It shouldn't come as a surprise that 43% of 4,500 CIOs surveyed named resistance to change as the number one barrier to a successful digital strategy (1).

Our reluctance to change can make our habits in the workplace hard to shift. When new tools or apps bring different ways of working and unfamiliar user interfaces, employees may simply revert to old routines and behaviors.

Annotate, on the other hand, uses ways of working that are familiar to employees. For example, Annotate's Topics feature offers chat-based document collaboration that looks and feels like an email client. By using a familiar interface, Topics makes it less daunting for employees to adopt this new tool and reap the benefits of more secure, more streamlined collaboration.

The Annotate platform also integrates with your team's existing tools and document repositories, allowing you to gradually replace point solutions over time instead of introducing too many changes into your employees' routines all at once.

Switching costs

When we 'multitask,' we are not actually doing multiple things at once. We are actually switching between tasks. But this switching makes us less, not more, efficient. It leads to more errors, and takes a toll on our productivity. In fact, it has been estimated that multitasking can reduce productivity by up to 40% (2).

A recent survey found that most employees use an average of four enterprise collaboration apps and 20% use six or more; 68% of employees switch between apps up to 10 times an hour (3). When employees use a different tool for every task, the frequent switching is almost certainly harmful for a team's productivity.

Annotate supports the entire collaboration process, allowing employees to take a document from first draft to final sign off, and collaborate with internal and external colleagues, without leaving the platform. This means there is no need to switch between apps, minimizing interruption and helping employees stay on task.





Hassle factor

Even when we have good intentions and we want to change our behavior, small barriers can stop us from successfully adopting new behaviors. For example, if a login process has too many steps, or if the steps require a lot of effort, we may give up part way through and decide not to complete the process.

Reducing the 'hassle factor' is all about removing unnecessary time and effort, and making it easier for employees to start and keep using new tools.

Annotate is designed to remove friction and streamline document collaboration. As a single platform that supports every step in the collaboration process, Annotate removes the need to move documents from one app to another when employees want to edit, review or share them.

Teams don't need to create complicated workflows using a different point solution for every task. Instead, Annotate gives users all the tools they need in one place. And unlike a patchwork of point solutions, the tools provided in Annotate have been designed to work together seamlessly.

Present bias

When faced with a choice between a modest reward today, and a greater reward in the future, we usually choose the former. That's because of our tendency to weigh immediate benefits more heavily than future ones, known as the 'Present bias.'

Digital transformation initiatives often create extra effort and even stress for employees in the near term, while they may not see the benefits until much further down the line. Employees end up 'voting with their feet' and turning away from new tools, or using them only grudgingly.

By contrast, as soon as teams start using Annotate for document collaboration, employees see the benefits immediately, finding they save time and effort.

For example, employees can stop wasting time tracking down the correct version of a document. They no longer need to reconcile feedback from chat apps or email threads into document editors. And they spend less time and energy managing multiple collaborators. Employees can simply assign tasks to specific users or groups and track their progress within the platform.

**See how Annotate
engages employees
– try it for free!**

**Annotate delivers document
collaboration that is rewarding,
simple and easy to use, from first
draft to final sign off. Try Annotate
for free by visiting our website:**

www.annotate.com

Endnotes:

(1) <https://www.cio.com/article/3248946/digital-transformation/12-reasons-why-digital-transformations-fail.html>

(2) <http://www.apa.org/research/action/multitask.aspx>

(3) <https://www.zdnet.com/article/survey-confirms-collaboration-and-the-apps-that-come-with-it-still-suck/>